

JESUS IS OUR SALVATION, LIGHT AND GLORY

Luke 2:21-40

Key Verse: 2:30, 32

“For my eyes have seen your salvation...a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.”

Once again, a blessed New Year 2022 to you all! We give thanks to God for bringing us through the year 2021 and enabling us to know, love and serve our Savior and King Jesus! May God bless and guide us in this new year 2022 through his living Word and Holy Spirit. May each of us pray to learn more about Jesus day by day. Today we want to learn more about three things: godly parenting, the leading of the Holy Spirit, and what Jesus came to give the world.

First, the blessing of godly parents (21-24). Jesus was born in Bethlehem and laid in a manger. It was the custom of all observant Jews to circumcise male baby boys on the 8th day. Would there be any exception for Jesus, the Son of God? No. Like every newborn Jewish boy, Jesus was circumcised on the 8th day based on God's covenant with Abraham. Mary and Joseph were serious about their Jewish faith. They were in covenant relationship with God. It was the best way they knew how to love and obey God. The day of circumcision was also the day to name their baby. They had already been given the baby's name by God through an angel: the name of Jesus. Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua. The name Jesus means, “The LORD saves,” because Jesus came to save his people from their sins (Mt 1:21). Joseph and Mary named him Jesus, not because they liked that name, but because God directed them to give him that name. That name, Jesus, would show his character and his life mission as the Savior of all people.

In verse 22, baby Jesus was now 40 days old since a Jewish woman had a purification time of 33 more days after giving birth to a boy. They brought baby Jesus to Jerusalem, which was only a few miles from Bethlehem, to present him at the temple. They followed the Law of the Lord carefully which said, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord” (Ex 13:2). Jesus was no ordinary child. But they did not treat him as a special case or give him special privileges. Jesus went through all the requirements for Jewish baby boys. They dedicated their firstborn son to the Lord.

If you are a parent, have you dedicated your firstborn to God? Have you dedicated all your children to God? I believe many in our church have done so, even in a baby dedication ceremony. Of course, this is not just a one-time ceremony. We must

continually offer up our children to God. We must pray for them all to know and serve the Lord Jesus Christ. The devil desires our children. The world woos our children. But God gave us our children, and we give them continually back to God.

Joseph and Mary also offered a sacrifice in keeping with the Law of the Lord. For those who couldn't afford a lamb, Leviticus 12:8 prescribed the following: "But if she cannot afford a lamb, she is to bring two doves or two young pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering. In this way the priest will make atonement for her, and she will be clean." This is the offering that Joseph and Mary gave, which indicated that they were poor. Jesus is the Son of the Most High God. Though he was the King of kings, he was not born in a royal palace with servants and an expensive crib. He was born into a poor family.

It's natural and normal for those in poverty to want to move up to a higher social status, to live a more comfortable life, and to have more or nicer things. This used to be called The American Dream: to have a 2-car garage and a swimming pool, maybe a summer cabin too. Jesus never had such a life. Jesus lived a life of poverty to make us spiritually rich. Apostle Paul wrote: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich" (2Cor 8:9).

Suppose you, as a parent, were to send your child to live somewhere? I expect you would choose a safe and comfortable place, wouldn't you? But God's Son was placed in low circumstances. God did not look for a wealthy, powerful family to raise His Son. He chose Mary to be his mother, and Joseph his father-figure. Luke emphasizes that Joseph and Mary were serious about following God in God's way. For them, that meant keeping the Law of the Lord. It meant living a life of prayer and devotion to God. Jesus was raised by godly parents. If you had godly, Bible-believing parents, you should thank God. If not, and your parents are still living, you should pray for them to know Christ.

So how are parents to raise their children in the Lord? Many parents put a lot of time, effort and energy in the best education for their children, hoping they'll have much wealth and honor. Many children go to college in pursuit of prestige and money. I'm not saying that's always bad. In fact, I met Jesus personally while I was a student at Northwestern University studying engineering, through Bible study in this church. Of course, it was not my intention to meet Jesus while studying engineering. I just wanted to get a good job. Recently I watched on youtube the marriage on Christmas day of Jacob Kim and Megan Martinez of CSUN UBF. Jacob was an honor student in high school and could've attended a top-ranked university, like UCLA or Berkeley. But he applied only to CSUN (ranked 19th in California) in order to receive spiritual education and training. Their marriage key verse was, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1Cor

10:31). Pastor Abraham McIlhenny, who gave the wedding address, said they could pursue wealth, respect and comfort. But they want to offer their family to pray for college students to grow as disciples of Jesus. To worldly people, they are unimpressive and even strange. But I believe their desire is precious to God. I pray that God may bless them with much fruit for his glory. May God also bless Michael and Alaa in our church fruitfully in Christ.

I learn from Joseph and Mary that instilling in my children the way of the Lord is the best thing I can do for my children. Missionary Isaac and Rebecca Choi have been travelling the world urging parents to educate their children in the faith. Surely God will bless us, our children, our congregation and even our nation as we seek to live for the Lord first for ourselves and for our children.

Second, Simeon, a man led by the Holy Spirit (25-28). Luke has already introduced us to some righteous people, like the godly couple Zechariah and Elizabeth, and Joseph and Mary. He mentions two more godly people in this passage: Simeon and Anna. Simeon was old, righteous and devout, and he was waiting for the consolation of Israel.

Consolation means comfort. Most people are waiting and hoping for some personal relief or blessing, like graduation, or marriage, or retirement, or a dream vacation. But Simeon had a national hope. He hoped his nation would be comforted. His nation Israel was in a time of suffering under Roman oppression. What comfort did Simeon hope for? It was not for the overthrow of the Roman government. He was looking forward to God's deliverance through the promised Messiah. He was looking forward to God's intervention. Simeon was looking for relief, deliverance and salvation, not just for himself, but for his nation. How could he have such a noble, national desire? The Bible says "the Holy Spirit was on him." Simeon was a righteous, devout man of God with a national hope.

Many people hope our nation can do something for them. In his inaugural address in 1961, President John F. Kennedy said the famous words, "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country." To extend these words in a spiritual direction we should ask not what God can do for us, but what we can do for God.

What is your hope and prayer for yourself? What is your hope and prayer for our nation? When we see increasing immorality, violence and godlessness in our nation, it is easy to lose hope. Last week we had an online conference with 250 leaders from the USA and Canada. We met to pray together and to encourage one another to grow as shepherds for God's flock and to make disciples of Jesus. This is our main prayer topic for 2022. Soon we will have 8 weeks of baptism classes for those wanting to be baptized on Easter. May God bless our United Easter conference to grow as and make disciples of Jesus in our homes and ministries.

This was Simeon's spirit. The Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. He would not get to see the Messiah's ministry, nor his death and resurrection. But God gave him the privilege to see baby Jesus with his own eyes and hold him in his own arms. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts and met baby Jesus at that very moment. Probably most people saw Jesus as an adorable baby boy. But Simeon saw him differently. God revealed to him that this was the Messiah, the Son of God, the Savior for all people.

Here we learn about the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives us holy desire to live a holy life. The Holy Spirit opens our eyes to see what God is doing. The Holy moves us to go where God is at work. The Holy Spirit reveals the Savior to us. The Holy Spirit leads us to Jesus.

Third, Simeon's prayer (29-40). Simeon's song or prayer has been called the *Nunc Dimittis* which is Latin for "now dismiss." Holding baby Jesus in his arms, Simeon praised God saying: "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel." Simeon's song is actually a prayer to the Sovereign Lord God, who kept his personal promise to Simeon, his national promises to Israel, and his global promises to mankind. Simeon was ready to die in peace, since he could see with his own eyes Jesus the Messiah. Simeon prophesied three things that Jesus would bring the world: salvation, light and glory. Let's think about each of these.

The first word is Salvation. "For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations..." Luke had already introduced us several times to salvation. Mary rejoiced in "God [her] Savior" (1:47). Zechariah called Jesus "the horn of salvation," who brings "salvation from our enemies," and he also mentioned "the knowledge of salvation, through the forgiveness of their sins"(1:69,71,77). Angels declared to shepherds "a Savior has been born to you...the Messiah, the Lord" (2:11). Yes, Jesus Christ made salvation available to all humankind. Later in Acts 4:12, Peter declared, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved." Salvation is indeed good news for all people, because it is what all people really need. Whoever doesn't think they need salvation is fooling themselves and lying to God as well as to people. Those who recognize their need for salvation and who trust in Jesus are blessed.

The second word is Light. Simeon said, "a light for revelation to the Gentiles." As already said, this salvation is not only for the Jews. It is for the whole world. It is for all nations. Jewish people refer to non-Jews as the Gentiles or the nations. The prophet Isaiah foretold this light to the Gentiles, "I will keep you and will make you to be a

covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles” (Isa 42:6). Again Isaiah prophesied, “It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth” (Isa 49:6). This world is filled with death and darkness. But Jesus is the light of the world. Whoever follows Jesus will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life (Jn 8:12). Jesus is the light who brings us out of any darkness. When we see that others are walking in darkness, we can help them to come to the Light, Jesus, or we can bring the Light of Christ to them. Sometimes it seems like people prefer darkness. That is actually deception and slavery. All souls yearn for the Light, the Truth, and Freedom. Jesus is the Light for all people.

The third word in Simeon’s prayer is Glory. “...and the glory of your people Israel.” Jesus brings great honor and glory to Israel, since the Messiah and Savior of the world came to the people of Israel and through them to the world. Glory also indicates the presence of God. God dwelt with his people in a glorious cloud above the ark of the covenant. The Jews had the greatest privilege to have God’s glorious presence dwell with them. Now the Messiah had come to dwell among them. Apostle John wrote, “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:14). Apostle Paul wrote, “The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God....For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ” (2 Cor 4:4,6).

After hearing Simeon’s words, Joseph and Mary marveled at his words. Simeon blessed them and then spoke some prophetic, painful words to Mary: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.” Since Jesus is salvation, light and glory, we would think that all people would rejoice and follow him. But that was not the case then, and it is still not the case now. People still love darkness, whenever their thoughts and actions are evil. Rather than repenting and coming into the light, sinful people get mad and rebel against God, like children who get mad when they are corrected or rebuked.

Jesus causes people to fall when they reject him and his teaching. But when people repent and believe in Jesus, they rise to new life as children of God. Many people speak against Jesus because they don’t want to expose their secret sins and dark hearts. But those who acknowledge and confess their sins find forgiveness and new life. Jesus’ life would be difficult—a sign that would be spoken against—because the world is often against God’s way and Spirit.

Simeon foretold suffering for Mary too, saying that a sword would pierce her own soul. Prophets of God are not well-received by corrupt and sin-sick people. Mary would suffer along with her son, Jesus, as he was despised, rejected, hated, and finally crucified. As long as the world is hostile to God, the people of God will suffer rejection and persecution.

Luke introduces another godly person, an old prayerful woman named Anna. She was married only 7 years then was a widow until she was 84. After losing her husband, Anna devoted herself fully to God. She never left the temple but stayed there worshiping night and day, fasting and praying. And she was a prophet. She is another devout person and precious to God. So she too was given special insight from God to recognize the baby Jesus. She came up at that very moment, gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. Like Simeon, she prophesied that Jesus would bring the great blessing of redemption to God's people. Redemption means to purchase the freedom of. Jesus purchased our freedom by his blood. We'll see more about this later in Luke's gospel.

Jesus returned with his parents to Nazareth, where he grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom and the grace of God was on him. We'll study more about this in the next passage.

Today we thought about the importance of godly parents. We also learned about being led by the Holy Spirit. Especially we learned more about Jesus, who came to bring salvation, light and glory to all who accept this good news. May God give us humble, earnest hearts to learn of Jesus more and more in 2022 and to follow him faithfully and fruitfully.